



Managing A Workforce - Keep'em Trained

David Grusenmeyer
Human Resource Management
Cornell University
PRO-Dairy

A dairy farm owner recently commented that as farms get larger and more complex, a manager, or outside farm consultants, won't be able to identify and solve all the problems that arise on a farm. To be efficient and competitive, producers must depend on trained, skilled employees and employee teams to identify and solve problems.

Continuous education and training is key to the success of any farming operation. First and foremost, farm owners and managers must possess a positive attitude toward training and continuing education. Then they must encourage employees to improve skills.

Broaden your outlook on training to benefit your farm. Don't fall into the trap that a milker should attend only milker or udder health training. Cross-training in other skills can motivate employees and serve your farm well if employees can then fill in for each other or grow into new jobs in the future.

Communication skills and team development training for employees can make them more efficient employees. And these skills can create a better work environment.

Giving employees time off to attend training, paid for in part or in full by the farm, can serve as a motivator. Employees often welcome the chance to improve their skills. Training opportunities also make them feel valued when they know an employer is investing in them.

Training opportunities include Cooperative Extension programs, community college and vocational technical school classes or educational meetings hosted by a variety of organizations or companies.

Consider educational meetings at your farm. They're an excellent way to upgrade employees' skills and build a team spirit. Invite your milk inspector, nutritionist, vet or drug company rep, machinery and equipment company reps, crop consultant, lender, business consultant, or anyone else you can tap to share their knowledge, skill and experience.